



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Rita M. Schmidt, Councilors Dean Antipas, Genevieve Cerf, Joe de la Cruz, Bruce S. Flax, Bob Frink, Rich Moravsik, Deborah L. Peruzzotti and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, September 9, 2014

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnahan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Mayor Schmidt noted receipt of a notice of resignation from Councilor Somers.

Mayor Schmidt asked for a moment of silence in honor of former City Mayor and Town Councilor Catherine Kolnaski who passed away on Sunday.

4. Approval of Minutes

2014-0246 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meetings of August 19, 2014 and August 26, 2014 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2014-0236 FYE 2015 Fire District PILOT

Discussed

- Mystic

Gil Ward, Don Mershon, Bill Canon, and Chief Fritz Hilbert were present and it was noted that the district had provided documents in the agenda packet for the Council's review.

In response to Councilor Cerf, Chief Hilbert stated that there has been no increase in mutual aid to Poquonnock Bridge yet. Mystic did not receive much assistance from Poquonnock Bridge in the past and mutual aid may be strained with Poquonnock Bridge's current personnel problems. Mystic has 2½ full-time personnel and per diem shifts are filled by volunteers (approximately 40). There is no union.

Mr. Canon described the district's budgeting, planning for capital expenses, and fund reserves.

Councilor Flax asked if there is an opportunity moving forward to look at other departments' equipment and sharing vehicles. Mr. Mershon noted that the Mystic Fire District is located in two towns. All their equipment is a regional asset or needed in both towns. Based on assessed values, two-thirds of the fire district is in Groton and one-third is in Stonington.

Mr. Canon noted that most responses are medical, but the only way to relieve that burden from the fire departments is to look at the ambulance services. Mr. Ward added that all apparatus is based on the requirements within the individual fire districts. Chief Hilbert noted that ISO ratings also drive equipment needs. With respect to the amount of apparatus that shows up, Chief Hilbert explained that the fire department never knows what they are facing or what equipment will be needed. Although it may appear that there is more equipment than needed, but he would rather have too much equipment than not enough. The fire department is often waiting over 20 minutes for the ambulance to arrive.

In response to Councilor Flax, Chief Hilbert noted there is good radio communication between the first districts that can be tailored to the situation. The majority of Mystic's volunteers are certified FF1 and either EMT or ERT. Marine training is received through the Coast Guard and the boat is manned by personnel from the region who train and work together. Chief Hilbert stated he would provide information on the training course received by boat operators.

It was noted that Stonington does not provide PILOT funding to the fire district. Mr. Canon addressed calculation of the mill rate, which is based on the amount of trash collection and the year of revaluation in each town. The rate is adjusted so that one town is not subsidizing the other.

Mr. Canon offered to assist in training Poquonnock Bridge volunteers.

In response to Councilor de la Cruz, Chief Hilbert indicated that the district has not experienced unwarranted medical calls.

In response to Councilor Cerf, Mr. Canon reviewed the history of the fire district owning the Mystic River Park. The park is self-supporting except for capital expenses, and income is being set aside for future needs.

Mayor Schmidt thanked the fire district representatives for coming.

2014-0238

Downtown Mystic Merchants Association Banner Program Funding Request

Discussed

Rod Desmarais of the Downtown Mystic Merchants Association distributed information to Councilors only showing pole locations and three examples of art design work from designers who responded to the request for proposals. Mr. Desmarais read his presentation and described the banner locations on a plan.

Councilor Cerf expressed her concern with the number of banners and noted received of communications opposed to the plan and the Town providing the funding. She asked the Downtown Mystic Merchants Association to consider asking businesses to finance the banners in exchange for their logo at the bottom.

Councilor Flax stated it is not fair to judge high school students' work as "unprofessional" before it is seen. The art teachers at Fitch would be very interested in participating in this project and they feel it would be good for the curriculum. Councilor Flax noted that Groton City received seed money from the Groton Business Association and their banner program is self-sustaining. Businesses also paid for the New London program.

Mr. Desmarais addressed Councilors' comments suggesting that naked poles would be more noticeable than the banners. He feels the banners are necessary to provide visual texture for the streetscape. Mr. Desmarais advocated for a professional design.

Councilor de la Cruz stated he can support the program if it advertises other areas of the Town.

Councilor Frink suggested starting with 10 banners with the Town paying half the cost, noting that banners are a distraction to drivers in a high pedestrian traffic area. Discussion followed. Mayor Schmidt has heard the same concerns and feels that the banners will add to the clutter and will be unappealing.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked if any other quotes were obtained as she had requested and Judy Hartley stated that all the quotes were provided to the Council last time and no further information was obtained. Councilor Peruzzotti stated she would like to hear the opinion of the Historic District Commission on the banners, even though they do not have any regulatory authority. Mr. Desmarais stated that the 19 designs have not been determined yet and the Association wants to manage what goes on the banners. He added that the Association approached the Chamber about the banner program, but they do not want to be involved. The funds that the Association raises through its programs are consumed as soon as the money is made so the Association does not have \$9,000.

In response to Councilor Flax's question of why the Mystic merchants should get \$9,000 from the taxpayers as opposed to other groups, Mr. Desmarais stated that Mystic is Mystic and it is the crown jewel of the Town.

Discussion followed on the previous action taken by the Council. At the August 26th Committee of the Whole meeting, a motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz to allocate (transfer) \$9,180 from Contingency funds for the downtown Mystic banner program. The motion was subsequently tabled.

A motion was made by Councilor Cerf, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, to amend the motion to provide \$4,500 (half the price) for 10 banners.

Town Manager Oefinger clarified that the Council would like the Historic District Commission to address the hanging of 19 2' x 4' banners in downtown Mystic.

A motion was made by Councilor Cerf, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to table action on the banner program request until the Historic District Commission has a chance to comment.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Frink, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 3 - Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax and Councilor Moravsik

2014-0235

Lease of Town Equipment to Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRA)

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, explained that the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resources Recovery Authority (SCRRA) is asking for permission to lease a piece of Town equipment known as a "walking floor trailer." Two trailers were purchased by the Town 10 years ago, but due to better recycling and the economic downturn, the Town only needs one. SCRRA would use the trailer to move woodchips around in the region, which would save money for the Town as well. It was noted that the "normal wear and tear" provision in the lease would be determined by inspection and mutual agreement.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0239

North Stonington Road Bridge

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted that Town officials met with Stonington officials about the North Stonington Road bridge project. Both parties agreed to proceed and are proposing to use existing settlement funds to hire a consulting engineer. The Town will remove the decking to expose the abutments for inspection, which is necessary in any event due to safety concerns. The condition of the abutments will determine the future effort and whether or not the bridge should be replaced. If the abutments are useable, there will be a future CIP project and funding request to replace the bridge.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Flax suggested Stonington take the lead and expressed concern that Stonington will not contribute equally. Discussion followed on the need for the bridge. The Town Manager noted a series of correspondence from the Old Mystic Fire Department asking that the bridge be replaced.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to amend the motion to hold a public hearing.

The Town Manager stated that he has heard from residents who are concerned with the bridge closure. He feels it is better for Groton to take the lead on the project because it is all new staff in Stonington. Use of the funding must be approved by both towns. Discussion followed on the need for a public hearing. The Town Manager explained that this is a relatively low cost exploration to determine the viability of the bridge.

The motion to amend failed by the following vote:

In favor: 3 - Councilors de la Cruz, Frink, and Moravsik

Opposed 5 - Mayor Schmidt and Councilors Watson, Cerf, Flax, and Peruzzotti

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor de la Cruz

2014-0252

West Shore Avenue Paving Project, Groton Long Point

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger distributed a spreadsheet analysis of West Shore Avenue paving bids prepared by Public Works. Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, reviewed the results of the analysis and the breakdown of the Town's costs, which do not include overhead or profit (15% to 20%). Mr. Schneider indicated this is a very difficult road to do in Groton Long Point because of property line identification, grades, variable driveway surfaces, etc. Town staff met with the Groton Long Point Association president and highway superintendent, and they would like to use the Town. The project would have to be scheduled for next spring due to the existing work schedule. If the Town Council is agreeable, the Town can plan for Groton Long Point paving with earlier notification in the future.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The Town Manager explained that the two entities have not yet developed the mechanics of sign off on the work. The Town's cost proposals were submitted to the engineer managing the bid process without seeing the other bids. Councilor Flax asked if the Groton Long Point project will affect the Town's paving program under the road bond. Mr. Schneider stated it will not have an extensive impact, but the Town will have to re-program other work that can be done off-season.

No overtime will be necessary. If the Town is given enough time to plan in the future, the Town can line up subcontractors ahead of time to minimize work delays.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0240

Reallocation of CIP Funds for Boiler Replacement at Water Pollution Control Facility

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, described the request to reallocate CIP funds for boiler replacement at the Water Pollution Control Facility. The Town Council and RTM previously approved a project to renovate a 6 bay garage. There are funds in the amount of \$382,972 remaining that will go into the undesignated fund balance if not reallocated for the boiler replacement. Discussion followed on the cost of the project.

Mr. Schneider noted the cost of the original project and Councilor Flax expressed concern with over budgeting on projects. The Town Manager stated that staff does not intentionally ask for more money. The RTM wants to be assured that there will be no need for additional funding requests. Many times with bids, it is the 'luck of the draw' and staff prefers to err on the side of returning funds, rather than underestimating.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2014-0211

Line Clearance Trimming and Removals, Sandy Hollow Road

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Frink, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Cerf stated she opposes the project because CL&P's program is not proactive.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Flax, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Cerf

2014-0223

Rubino Driveway Apron, River Road

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that one item of discussion from the public hearing was an alternative surface for the driveway apron. The Director of Public Works has reviewed the Town's Road and Drainage Standards and there is flexibility to allow a different type of apron and different dimensions.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilors discussed the need for the apron, which is required by the Town's Road and Drainage Standards. Keith Neilson, representing the owners of the property, stated they will do whatever is required by the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Moravsik, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, to amend the motion to eliminate the requirement for a driveway apron.

The motion carried by the following vote:

In favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt and Councilors de la Cruz, Frink, Moravsik, Watson, Cerf, and Peruzzotti

Opposed: 1 - Councilor Flax

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 7 - Mayor Schmidt, Councilor Cerf, Councilor de la Cruz, Councilor Frink, Councilor Moravsik, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Flax

2014-0251 Spicer Park Dock Replacement

Discussed

Jerry Lokken, Recreation Services Manager, described the request to add an FYE 2015 CIP project to install a replacement dock at Spicer Park, which is home to rowing and kayaking activities. The replacement dock would provide access to users with disabilities and create a safer environment. The Town Council previously approved the sale of the old dock to raise funds for the new dock. The total cost is \$61,000. The department is \$7,000 short and would like to use funds from Capital Reserve, with the fees generated from the facility going to pay off the loan."The department has received a DEEP permit, and several boards and commissions support the project. There will be no impact on the taxpayers.

A motion was made by Councilor Flax, seconded by Councilor Moravsik, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0156 Town Manager Annual Evaluation (2013)

Discussed

In response to questions about what is remaining to be done with respect to the 2013 evaluation, Town Manager Oefinger explained that traditionally the Committee of the Whole and Town Council pass a resolution when the Town Manager's annual evaluation is completed.

2014-0155 Town Manager Annual Evaluation (2014)

A motion was made by Councilor Frink, seconded by Councilor de la Cruz, to go into executive session at 8:47 p.m. to discuss #2014-0155 Town Manager Annual Evaluation (2014) and to invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session ended at 10:05 p.m.

Limited discussion then took place concerning the Town Manager's evaluation.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 p.m.